

How to learn and understand the Book of Allah and the *Sunna* of His Prophet. It is reported that it used to be easier to act by it than to memorise it

In the *Kitāb al-Bayān*, ad-Dānī reports from ‘Uthmān, Ibn Mas‘ūd and Ubayy that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, used to recite ten āyats to them, and they did not go on to another ten until they knew what action was connected to those āyats. So we should learn the Qur’ān and how to act by it at the same time. It is reported that as-Sulamī said, “When we learned ten āyats of the Qur’ān, we did not learn the ten after them until we knew what they contained of the *halāl* and *harām*, of prohibitions and commands.” In the *Muwattā'*, Mālik reported that he heard that ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar spent eight years learning *Sūrat al-Baqara*. In his book, *The Names of Those who Transmitted from Mālik*, Ahmad ibn ‘Alī ibn Thābit mentions that Nāfi‘ transmitted that Ibn ‘Umar said, “‘Umar learned *al-Baqara* over twelve years. When he finished, he slaughtered a camel.” Al-Anbārī reports that ‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd said, “It was difficult for us to memorise the words of the Qur’ān, but easy for us to act by

them. After us will be people for whom it is easy to memorise the Qur'ān, but hard to act by it."

It is reported that Ibn 'Umar said, "The best of the Companions of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, at the beginning of this Community only memorised a *sūra* or two of the Qur'ān. They were given the gift of acting by the Qur'ān. The last of this community will recite the Qur'ān – children and blind – and will not be given the gift of acting by it." Khalaf ibn Hishām al-Bazzār was heard to say, "I only think that the Qur'ān in our hands has been denuded [of action]. That is because we were told that 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb memorised *Sūrat al-Baqara* over the course of about ten years. When he had memorised it, he slaughtered a camel to thank Allah. In our time, a boy sits before me and recites a third of the Qur'ān without missing out a single letter. I only reckon that the Qur'ān is denuded in our hands."